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Bluefin tuna

Greens welcome Commission support for bluefin trade ban but warn against further handouts to fishing industry

European Fisheries Commissioner Maria Damanaki and Environment Commissioner Janez Potocnik today announced European Commission support for Appendix 1 listing of bluefin tuna in CITES (1), albeit with a delay and under certain conditions. The joint statement of the new Commissioners marks an end to the division of opinion between the two Directorates-General in recent times.

Green MEP **Raül Romeva** is European Parliament rapporteur for bluefin tuna and will present a report on bluefin tuna trade issues at the EP fisheries committee tomorrow. He commented:

"I welcome that the European Commission is at last presenting a strong and united front to support a ban in the international trade of bluefin tuna. Member States must now follow suit if bluefin tuna stocks are to have any chance to recover. If the EU is serious about respecting scientific advice - as it claims - it should support an immediate closure of the bluefin tuna fishery as well as a ban in the international trade of bluefin tuna instead of imposing conditions and delays.

It may already be too late. The EU has been instrumental in the bluefin tuna's slide towards extinction, contrary to the Commissioners' claims today. The Commission and the Member States have lobbied aggressively against adequate conservation measures at ICCAT (2) and several Member States have subsidised the fishing vessels that have pushed bluefin tuna stocks to breaking point. (3)

The EU must not compound its earlier errors by providing yet more taxpayers' money to those same owners of industrial fishing vessels who are responsible for driving the species and their own businesses to the edge of collapse."

Notes to editors:

(1) Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. An Appendix 1 listing of a species implies an international trade ban. CITES next meets in Doha, Qatar, 13-25 March 2010.

(2) The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas

(3) In response to a written request from Raül Romeva, the Commission admitted that Member States had provided €34.5 million in subsidies to vessels fishing bluefin tuna from 2000-2009.

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